



PRESS RELEASE
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Land for Maine's Future Board Selects Exemplary Conservation and Farm Projects Across Maine

*Grants to help support conservation of 139,300 acres of
Maine's best natural, recreational, and farm resources*

AUGUSTA – Using funds approved by voters last fall, the Land for Maine's Future Board voted today to give approval to 31 land conservation projects across the state, including 8 farms. In all, the projects, which range from 266-acre Tibbetts Farm in Berwick to the 3,688-acre Grafton Notch Project in Oxford County just east of the Appalachian Trail, will ensure public access for recreation and conserve wildlife habitat on over 136,600 acres along with farmland protection on 2,700 additional acres. In total, the Board allocated almost \$12 million including \$10 million for conservation and recreation projects, \$1.7 million for farmland protection projects and \$380,000 for projects providing boat, fishing and swimming opportunities. With this action, the LMF Board has committed virtually all of its available funds for conservation and farmland protection.

"Taken as a whole, these projects represent a striking example of the creativity of Maine citizens all over the State who are working for a better future in their communities", said LMF Board Chairman George Lapointe. "These folks understand and value the special relationship Mainers have always had with the wonderful working and wild lands of this state. I'm proud that this administration was able to advocate for a new LMF bond which Maine voters approved so decisively last fall."

Responding to total requests that represented almost twice as much money as it had available, the LMF Board was challenged to meet the conservation needs of the State. "The Board understands that it is taking a calculated risk", said Tim Glidden LMF director. "It is possible that some of these projects may struggle due to limited funding. Even with today's good investments, there are farm projects and emerging conservation needs that the Board will not be able to address without additional funds."

Today's finalists, located in 15 counties throughout Maine, include a 24-mile trail along the Dead River, one of Maine's most popular kayaking stretches. This project will provide the first keystone link in the "Maine Huts & Trails" system that is expected to stretch from the Mahoosuc to Moosehead Lake. Another project will complete the successful efforts to conserve the Machias River system, a nationally famous wilderness canoeing destination with significant wildlife and fisheries habitat.

"These projects represent strategic investments in Maine's future", said public board member Leon Gorman. "In addition to conserving important aspects of the State's natural heritage, many of these projects will also contribute to Maine's economic health. With tourism such a big and growing part of Maine's businesses, these conserved lands are a part of the State's economic infrastructure right along with its roads, bridges and electric power system." As an example, the Height of Land Project would protect the spectacular scenic outlook that forms the gateway to the Rangeley Lakes Region, a popular vacation destination for generations.

More than half of the projects are located in southern Maine towns, many of which are struggling with mounting development pressures and sprawl. These projects include a thriving community-supported farm project which lies close by a lovely coastal property in Brunswick. Both projects will help protect the watershed of Maquid Bay, a productive clamming area in Casco Bay. Another locally-driven project will conserve over 4,200 acres in Orland - the middle of a rapidly growing area bounded by Bangor, Bucksport, Ellsworth, and the Blue Hill peninsula.

Further north, several projects will conserve large blocks of ecologically and economically important timberland which will continue as an important part of the region's economy as well as providing important opportunities for outdoor recreation including hunting.

Eight farmland protection projects, ranging from 30 to over 1900 acres in size, will help these farmers continue as important parts of their communities' economy and cultural heritage. The largest of these projects, located in northern Kennebec and western Waldo counties, has the goal of conserving multiple farms that are active in the State's dairy industry and in an area with significant natural resource value as well.

[See attached list of Projects for those of interest to your readers]

The Land for Maine's Future Program was created in 1987 in response to concerns over the loss of critical natural areas and wildlife habitat along with traditional access to undeveloped lands for hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. To date, the Land for Maine's Future Program has protected over 240,000 acres of Maine's best recreational and natural areas. The Program also seeks to protect farmlands through the purchase of development rights and public access to water for fishing boating and commercial marine activities. Working with other state agencies and numerous local governments and charitable nonprofit groups, the Land for Maine's Future Board adheres to a "willing seller only" policy. A series of previous bond issues, overwhelmingly approved by Maine voters, provides funding for these projects. With today's action virtually all of the farm and conservation funds have been committed. Limited funding remains available for water access protection.